A Catholic Answer to the Heretical Question of the Jesuits

by

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Prologue

To the American student the study of the theology of the Lutheran Reformation and early Post-Reformation eras is doubly daunting: First one may be overwhelmed by the sheer mass of the literary material that was produced in the first two centuries of Protestantism, and then by the fact that only the smallest fraction of this material has been translated into the English language. While the writings of Luther are readily accessible, the writings of his contemporary partisans are almost entirely untranslated. The literature of the years following the Reformation movement in Germany also receive little attention from translators. This parallels the trend of most of the basic histories of the Reformation and early seventeenth century, which relate only that after Luther tremendous fighting among the Lutherans set-in which culminated in a scholastic codification of Lutheran doctrine.[1] While this is basically true, such a generalization easily gives the false impression that the formative era of Lutheran thought and perspective ended with the death of Luther. This stereotype soon dissolves when the student probes deeper into the literature of the Post-Reformation Lutherans and discovers there, rather than in the writings of Luther, the beginnings of the development of many ideas which are now characterized as "Lutheran." One level deeper still the student will again be perplexed by the lack of unity and the lingering trend toward spiritualization and mysticism which undergirds the thought of those who were supposedly the most scholastic of writers such as Gerhard, Mentzer, Hutter, and Calov. At this point the student must accept that modern scholarship has barely

[1] Cf. A.G. Dickens, *Reformation and Society in Sixteenth-Century Europe* , London, Thames and Hudson, 1966. pp. 104-106, Harold J. Grimm, *The Reformation Era: 1500-1650*, New York, Macmillan, 1954. pp. 484-489.

scratched the surface of Post-Reformation German thought. But all of these discoveries remain lost behind the cloak of the difficult Latin and German of the period, and without translation the writings of that era will never inform the understanding of more than a handful of specialists.

Some important works such as the *Loci* of Chemnitz and Melanchthon,[2] Chemnitz' *Enchiridion*,[3] and *Examination of the Council of Trent*,[4] have recently been translated and made widely available, and works by Quenstedt and Gerhard have been translated, though they are more difficult to find. All of these works are still so few and so selective that it is impossible to develop from them a well-rounded understanding of the methods and perspective of the Post-Reformation age. The vast bulk of material coming from the printing presses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not major dogmatic treatises but devotional material and tracts. The former held influence with only the narrow circles of academia, while the latter represents the reading of the laity. The tract and the devotional were read by the princes and the middle class alike, and as such they are critical for a proper understanding of how the Reformation was perceived by the vast majority of people who were not theologians. The academic writing is certainly important for understanding the mind of the theologian of early modern Europe, but to ignore the popular writing is to ignore the publications that had the broader, and we may argue the more significant, impact.

It is my purpose here to present a translation and brief analysis of a small work which was widely published in seventeenth-century Lutheranism, and which will greatly aid our understanding of the era, namely, Balthasar Meisner's, *A Catholic Answer to the Heretical Question of the Society Against Jesus (The Jesuits): "Where were the True Religion and Church before the Time of Luther?"*. This tract has much to

[2]Melanchthon, *Loci Communes, 1543*, St. Louis, Concordia, 1992., and Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, St. Louis, Concordia, 1989. Both translated by J.A.O. Preus.

[3]St. Louis, Concordia, 1981. Luther Poellot, translator.

[4]St. Louis, Concordia, 1971. Fred Kramer, translator.

recommend it to the student of history, including: its popularity in the Seventeenth Century, its insight into anti-Jesuit polemic, its large number of historical references, and the fact that it is popular writing, rather than the dogmatic treatises which are the bulk of what has been translated into English thus far. It is not an answer to the problems which face the student of the Post-Reformation era, but it is a contribution.

Introduction

The Thirty Years' War

We must be very careful to avoid any hasty judgments about the relationship of the Thirty Years' War to Meisner's motivation for writing his tract. Characterizations of the War as a conflict between Catholic and Protestant are not entirely applicable in 1623, when *A Catholic Answer* was first published. Certainly there were events concurrent with the writing of this tract that would require Lutheran theologians to renew polemic efforts against the Roman theologians, as we will see, but to this point Lutherans, as an ideological group, were in no state of active rebellion against the Catholic Emperor.

The chaos and destruction of the Thirty Years' War had not yet swept through the majority of the Lutheran lands in 1623, only five years into the conflict. The actual fighting had been restricted to territories on the borders of lands held by Lutheran princes, particularly Hungary. In fact the greatest battle of the early stage of the war, the battle of White Mountain in 1620, saw many Lutheran forces, including the army of the Lutheran Elector of Saxony, fighting for Emperor Ferdinand II.[5] The main enemy of the Emperor in that battle was Frederick, the Calvinist Elector of the Palatinate. It may be that the Lutherans at this time, in addition to promoting their political fortunes, sought to reestablish the security of the Peace of Augsburg (1555), which ended Lutheran-Catholic military conflict by allowing each territory to be either Catholic or Lutheran, according to its prince, without the complication of Calvinism in the German territories. But if this was the case, the Lutherans soon found out that Emperor Ferdinand II was pursuing a much different ideal.

5 A. Lloyd Moote, *The Seventeenth Century: Europe in Ferment*, Lexington, Mass., D.C. Heath & Co. 1970. pp. 155-56

Ferdinand II was well trained by the Jesuits at the University of Ingolstadt in the importance of countering both the Turk and the Protestant Reformation.[6] Ferdinand himself made no secret of his religious agenda, so it should have come as no surprise to the Protestants that in the wake of his complete victory at White Mountain the Emperor would seek to advance the Jesuit cause of reclaiming Protestant territories for the Pope. Perhaps the Lutheran princes of Germany did not expect the changes which Ferdinand instituted between 1620 and 1627 ever to have an effect on Lutherans north of Austria, Hungary, and Bavaria, but it seems more reasonable that they did not really expect them to occur at all. The events which followed White Mountain in these southern territories gave good cause for the Elector of Saxony and others to regret their eagerness to support the Emperor. Ferdinand quickly replaced the defeated Protestant princes and rulers in Austria and Bohemia with Catholics, thereby forcing conversion to Catholicism through the very Peace of Augsburg which had served the interests of the Lutherans of these territories before. Concurrently the emperor filled every major university with Jesuit teachers, who, in the very founding of their order, were charged with regaining lands lost to the Reformation.[7] Regardless of the opinions of the princes, the Lutheran Theologians, especially in Electoral Saxony, saw the objectives of the Counter-Reformation of decades past being realized in their own time. The response of these theologians was a flurry of anti-Roman Catholic, and particularly anti-Jesuit polemic, of which the tract we are considering by Meisner is a prominent example. Although the cause of Meisner's writing can be found immediately in the events of the Thirty Years' War around the time the tract was composed, the style, objective, and general ideology of our tract belongs properly to the family of Lutheran writings against the Counter-Reformation. Meisner's work shows a direct continuity with, and even an outright copying of, earlier polemics against the Jesuits

[6] ibid. p. 154.
[7] ibid. p. 155.

which began as soon as the new religious order was recognized as a threat by the Lutheran theologians of the sixteenth century. We will return to a discussion of anti-Jesuit polemic later, after a brief consideration of both the movement commonly called the Counter-Reformation and the part the Jesuits played in it.

The Counter Reformation

From an historical perspective it is most accurate to use the term "Catholic Reformation" for that movement which is also commonly called the "Counter-Reformation." Historically the movement was not entirely directed against the Lutherans and Calvinists, but was also concerned with making the legitimate reforms which were necessary to preserve the Roman church after the confusion and corruption of the later medieval era.[8] Steven Ozment explains that the "Counter Reformation was far more complex than simply a response to the Protestant challenge;" it was really the "continuation of late medieval efforts to reform the medieval church" and it effected many positive reforms such as the healing of the breach between "lay piety and the official church religion."[9] However, the positive or progressive side of this movement was not readily apparent to the Lutherans who saw only that face of the movement which was a concerted effort to counter the spread of their faith and regain territory which the Pope had already lost to them. To the sixteenth century Lutheran the Roman church was not working toward any type of reform, but was consciously working to stamp-out the legitimate reforms already made by Luther, Melanchthon, and their colleagues, and draw all people back into the tyranny of the Pope. It was in every sense a "Counter Reformation" to the Lutheran observer.

The initial Roman response to the German Reformation made within Luther's own lifetime by men such as Hieronymus Emser, Johannes Cochlaeus, and

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[8] Cf. Grimm, op. cit., pp. 366-67.

[9] Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform: 1520-1550*, New Haven Connecticut, Yale University Press, 1980. pp. 397-98.

Johannes Eck, was fiercely critical and followed the simple strategy of asserting that the Lutherans were guilty of holding any number of doctrines which were previously declared heretical by the Roman church.[10] It was an inadequate response, made by inadequate scholars. The zeal of the Catholics was largely blind, and most early accusations were easily demonstrated by the Lutheran scholars to be unfounded. The four hundred and four articles against the Lutherans circulated by Eck at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 were easily addressed by the scholarship of Melanchthon, who undercut the entire document merely by expanding and editing those articles which he had intended to present anyway.[11] Another problem for the early Catholic opponents of the Reformation was that the reformers' criticism of the disarray in the Roman church was often legitimate, and Rome had as yet no positive answer to the challenge of the Protestants, but merely negative criticisms of the opposition. A positive answer would come, slowly, through the many years of the Council of Trent, but other strategies were needed in the intervening years.

After the initial confrontations there was some official attempt at reconciliation by both sides, with the effort culminating at Regensburg in 1541. Some concessions were made by both sides, but in the end the differences between the two sides were determined to be irreconcilable.[12] Unable to obtain a swift victory, and unable to work-out reconciliation on acceptable terms, the Roman Church was left with the strategy of slowly reclaiming Protestant lands, territory by territory, through a campaign of propaganda and education and also secular politics, whenever possible. This is the movement as it earned the name "Counter Reformation" from the Protestants. Many monastic orders were active in this campaign, including Dominicans and the Capuchins quite prominently, but it was a

[10] Cf. Grimm, op. cit., p. 374.

[11] Cf. H.E. Jacobs, *Historical Introduction, Appendixes and Indexes to the Book of Concord; or the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Philadelphia, Board of Publication of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, 1908. pp. 29 & 69.

[12] Cf. Ozment, op. cit., p. 406

new order, the Jesuits, who were best suited to the task at hand, and proved most effective over the decades, as the host of Lutheran responses directed specifically against the Jesuits testifies.

The Jesuits

Founded in 1540 as a missionary and teaching society by Ignatius Loyola and a small circle of his friends, the Society of Jesus, or the 'Jesuits,' was intended to be focused on mission work among Muslims, but became in less than twenty years a principal tool of the Counter-Reformation, with the primary aim of regaining the territories lost to Protestantism.[13] This shift of focus is largely traceable to the vow of unconditional obedience to the Pope which included the "'propagation of the faith' in whatever countries he might wish to send them,'whether to the Turks or other infidels, or to the regions called India, or to the lands of heretics and schismatics, or of faithful Christians."[14] By commission, therefore, the Jesuits were poised to be wielded as the Pope's army against the Lutherans, among other "heretics and schismatics."

In the Jesuits the Lutherans found opponents like none they had faced before. Every Jesuit was required to have extensive formal education and complete a program of study.[15] The Jesuits suffered from no shortcomings in scholarship as had many of the earliest opponents of the German Reformation. Furthermore, the Jesuits were organized not so much as a monastic order but more as a military regiment. Through a strict adherence to rank and a specific chain of command the Jesuits were able to operate with the greatest possible efficiency in their opposition to all error. The constitution of the Society of Jesus places the Pope personally at the head of Jesuit hierarchy, the supreme commander of the regiment. Every Jesuit

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[13]Cf. Walker, Williston, et al., *A History of the Christian Church*, Fourth Edition, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985. pp. 508-509

[14]Latourette, Kenneth Scott, *A History of Christianity*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1953. p. 847

[15] Ozment, op. cit., p. 414.

was sworn to unconditional and unquestioning obedience to the Pope. Obedience was more absolute than that found in any other order. As Ignatius Loyola himself wrote: "If we wish to be sure that we are right in all things, we should always be ready to accept this principle: I will believe that the white that I see is black, if the hierarchical church so defines."[16] At the same time the Jesuits were not bound to many of the ritual requirements of other orders such as strict communal observance of the canonical hours, and a rigid dress code. The Jesuit was designed to be free to carry-out his mission on the front lines, free to move in the world rather than bound to a cloister. The Jesuits were the "shock troops" of the Pope, streamlined for the task of regaining the Protestant lands through teaching and educated influence. They quickly became the forefront of all aspects of the Catholic Reformation, and were the most prominent voices at the culmination of this movement in the Council of Trent.[17]

Two Jesuits in particular were behind the early efforts to regain the German lands for the Papacy, Pierre Le Févre and Peter Canisius, who in 1556 became the provincial of the Jesuit order in upper Germany.[18] The methods employed by these men early on became the pattern for the Counter Reformation in Germany. The strategy of the Jesuits in the German lands was primarily focused on education. The upper classes, and particularly the nobility, were targeted the establishment of Jesuit colleges in Vienna, Cologne, Prague, Ingolstadt, Munich, Mainz, Trier, Würzburg and Speyer.[19] Jesuits also became prominent founders and teachers in the lower levels of education, teaching the boys of the Catholic German territories from the moment they were ready to enter school. The high level of academic training required by the order made Jesuits among the most well qualified candidates for

[16] ibid. p. 416.

[17] Specific examples are Diego Lainez and Alfonso Salmeron (cf. Walker, op. cit., p. 510), in addition to the names brought up by Chemnitz in his *Examination of the Council of Trent*, (St. Louis, Concordia, 1979).

[18] Grimm, op. cit., p. 385

[19] Ibid.

teaching positions everywhere, and in this way they became the influential instructors of many laymen who would be true to their ideals in their activity in the secular realm. We have already seen how effective this was in the person of Emperor Ferdinand II. Many of the nobility, trained by Jesuits, were to have Jesuit confessors and advisors in their courts.[20]

The Jesuit campaign of education in Germany was sweeping, operating not only in the academic world but also among the masses. The common people needed simple, straightforward reasons to remain loyal to the Roman Church. Canisius provided this personally with the publication of both a large and small "catechism" designed to counter Luther's large and small catechisms which had proven effective in educating the laity in the Lutheran faith.[21] Undergirding all of the efforts of the Society of Jesus in the German lands was the activity of the Jesuit parish priest. The common people heard from the Jesuit father simple, straightforward sermons in their own language.[22] In this way every simple peasant could be equipped with the arguments of the Roman Church against the Protestants, and be redirected to the properly Roman understanding of the Christian faith. The Counter Reformation as it was carried-out by the Society of Jesus was quite effective. Steven Ozment reports that approximately one-third of the lands lost to Protestants through the Reformation were recovered, officially, for the Pope by the end of the sixteenth century.[23]

At the same time as the Jesuits were about their most arduous efforts to regain the lands of the Lutheran Reformation the order was also active in the Council of Trent (1545-63) where the doctrines of the Roman Catholic church were codified and established over-against the errors of the Protestants. For the Roman Church the Council implied official resolution to the doctrinal diversity which had

[20] ibid. p. 382.
[21] ibid. p. 386.
[22] ibid. p. 382.
[23] Ozment, op. cit., p. 416

weakened the late medieval church to the point where it produced the Protestant reforming movements. For the Counter Reformation activity of the Jesuits the decrees of the Council meant official sanction and approval of the doctrines taught by the Jesuits in the German lands. The campaign in Germany could be stepped-up with every decree of the Council, since the Roman Church now had positive and conclusive statements of its doctrine with which to answer Protestant objections.

The Lutheran Response

The Lutherans did not immediately recognize the nature of the opposition to the German Reformation which was posed by the Jesuits. The Jesuits had been actively operating in Germany for two decades by the time they were first opposed as a group separate from the general Roman Catholic opposition which had gone before. By this time most of the Jesuit colleges had been established and the Jesuit strategy had been effectively winning converts back to the Roman Church. By this time the Jesuit dominance at the Council of Trent was also well known. We cannot be sure what clouded the Lutheran vision of either the peculiar threat to the German Reformation posed by the Jesuit order, or the tremendous effectiveness of the Jesuits in Protestant lands. But once begun, the Lutheran reaction was strong and widespread.

At the forefront of the Lutheran response to the Jesuits was Martin Chemnitz, then coadjutor and later Superintendent (the Lutheran equivalent of the Roman Catholic position of Bishop[24]) of Braunschweig. J.A.O. Preus writes in his

[24] There is always some objection made to the equation of "Superintendant" with "Bishop" among the scholars of American Lutheranism which has no real Episcopal governing structure. However, the two terms are bluntly declared to be synonymous in a formal statement on the ministry made by the theological faculty of Leipzig in the mid-16th Century (As recorded in *Vom Beruff und Enturlaubung der Prediger,* Giessen, Nicolas Hampelius, 1608. p. 22) It is clear from the standard seventeenth-century anthology on the subject of Church polity, *De Ecclesiastica Jurisprudentia* compiled by Benedict Carpzov (Leipzig, Schuster, 1621) that this equivocation was universally accepted among the Lutherans of that time. Such points are critical to informing us of how Roman Catholic the early Lutherans were in their mindset, as opposed to the more protestant direction Lutheranism has taken since the Thirty-Years' War.

biography of Chemnitz, *The Second Martin*, that Chemnitz was "apparently one of the earliest to recognize the extreme danger that this group, the spearhead of the Counter-Reformation, posed for Protestantism."[25] Preus goes on to inform us that this recognition of Chemnitz led to his production of two works which were essentially leveled against the Jesuits. The first was the *Theologiae Iesuitarum* which was first published in 1562.[26] A quickly prepared polemic, with a certain sarcastic bite, this work was a response to the Jesuit censure of John Monheim, a Roman priest of Duesseldorf with sympathies for the theology of the Reformation. The Jesuit response to this document was written by Diego Paiva de Andrada, a Jesuit who had been in attendance at Trent. Andrada's response precipitated Chemnitz' ultimate answer to the arguments of the Jesuits, the *Examination of the Council of Trent*.[27] Through the years after Chemnitz' death, and particularly prior to escalation of the Thirty-Years' War in 1627, the Jesuits remained strong in Germany, and so did the need for a doctrinal defense among the Lutherans.[28]

Tracts against the Jesuits were undertaken by a great many Lutherans throughout the years between Chemnitz' first polemic and the Jesuit activity after the battle of White Mountain. Johann Georg Walch, in the first volume of his *Einleitung in der Religions Streitigkeitung der Evangelisch=Lutherischen Kirche*, gives a short list of merely those who have written responses to the very question which Meisner mentions in his title.[29] In addition to Meisner's book, Walch mentions particularly Johann Jakob Beck's *Lutheranism before Luther*, August Pfeiffer's work by the same title, and a Latin work by Friedrich Balduin entitled, *The True Church of*

[25]Preus, J.A.O., *The Second Martin*, St. Louis, Concordia, 1994. p. 124.

[26] The Copy which I have studied was published by Antonij Bertrami, in 1602, forty years after the original, giving some testimony to the enduring influence of this work.

[27]Preus, op. cit., p. 126.

[28]For a Roman view of the work of the Jesuits in Germany, see L. Pastor's *History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, vol. XIII (London, Routledge &Kegan Paul, 1951.)

[29]Jena, Johann Meyers, 1730, p. 3.

Christ before the Time of Luther. Friedrich Balduin was the brother-in-law of Balthasar Meisner, and the two were quite close friends who talked frequently of their work. No date is given for the work of Balduin, so given the close relationship of Balduin and Meisner, the question becomes one of who was influenced by whom to write his work. We will see later that Meisner's text may contain a reference to Balduin's work, making Meisner indebted to his brother-in-law.

About the Author, Balthasar Meisner:[30]

Balthasar Meisner was born in 1587, the son of an Archdeacon in Dresden. At the age of 15 he began his studies in Wittenberg, finding lodging in this illustrious city first with Aegiddius Hunnius, but soon moving to the house of his own famous brother-in-law, Friedrich Balduin. Meisner and Balduin were dear friends, who influenced one another both personally and professionally, and Meisner took care to keep up correspondence after Balduin left to assume the Superintendency of Oelsnitz.

Meisner was a characteristically studious and bookish young man at Wittenberg. After two years he had earned his master's degree in the study of philosophy, and after another five years of rigorous study he was honored to become an adjunct, or junior lecturer, for the philosophical faculty. Meisner received a ducal stipend which he employed to allow him to study briefly at three major universities of his time, Giessen, Strassbourg, and Tuebingen. Wherever he went he made acquaintances with the major teachers of his day. In 1611 Meisner

[30]Of the life of Balthasar Meisner there is absolutely nothing substantial in the English language. Of the work in German, all of the encyclopedic entries rely on the biographical work of Dr. A. Tholuck. Tholuck himself worked from primary sources which are unavailable on this side of the Atlantic. For this short biographical section I have consulted and blended the information Tholuck provides in his 3 works: *Der Geist der Lutherischen Theologen Wittenbergs*, (Hamburg u. Gothe, Friedrich und Andreas Perthes, 1852. pp. 14-37.), *Lebenszeugen der Lutherischen Kirche*, (Berlin, Wiegandt & Grieben, 1859. pp. 202-209), and the entry in the Herzog *Realenzyklopaedie fuer Protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, (Stuttgart und Hamburg, Rudolf Besser, 1858. pp. 251-52) which was authored by Tholuck.

became a professor of the philosophy of ethics at Wittenberg upon the recommendation of the court preacher, Hoe. In 1613 he became a Professor of Theology, a post which he held for the rest of his life, even though he received many calls to other positions.

Meisner was, throughout his life, much respected as a very pious man and for this reason many sought his correspondence and advice. Among these were his intimate friends B. Mentzer and Johann Gerhard, as well as Duke Thurzo of Hungary who signed his letters to Meisner, "your son in Christ." Gerhard, in particular, wrote very heartfelt and intimate letters to his friend Meisner, laying his personal feelings and concerns before him. These two shared a deep concern over the piety of the Lutheran Church and her theologians, which appeared to them to be less than it should be.

Meisner also kept-up steady correspondence with all of his family members, from which we know that Meisner was married to a woman by the name of Magdalena, whom he loved very much, and they had children. Balthasar Meissner died "in the blossom of his years," at the young age of thirty-nine. The cause of death is not related, but it seems to have been quite sudden.

Little more can be said of the personal life of Balthasar Meisner, for although there are many praise-filled accounts of his life and works, there is no biography which concerns itself with the details of his life. What is known, as one may surmise from this discussion, is known from correspondence, which has been preserved in a four volume folio that is not available to us.

Meisner's literary work was not as extensive as that of some of his contemporaries, but many of his works were widely read and used at that time and long after his death. Among these are: 1) the *Philosophia sobria*, a work dealing with the misuse of of philosophy in scholarship which was employed as a textbook long into the eighteenth century, 2) a large work which was unfinished at his death and

published posthumously dealing with Christian piety. The first two words of the extremely long Latin title are *pia desideria*. This is noteworthy, for although there were many works with the same title in both the Roman and Protestant churches, this particular work was taken in hand by Philip Jakob Spener who praised it highly. Spener wrote a dedication for this book and it was published in 1679, four years after Spener's own *pia desideria*.[31] A study comparing these two works would be helpful, since it is quite unlikely that Meisner, as a philosophy professor and the intimate friend of Gerhard, would share Spener's general juxtaposition of academia and piety. 3) a third very influential work of Meisner's is the one which is here translated.

Some final Prolegomena to the Book, *A Catholic Answer...*:

This book was first published in 1623. The edition used for this translation is a reprint made in 1697 and bound together with a short work of N. Hunnius, *A Brief and Solid Instruction from which the True-Hearted Reader may judge concerning the Roman and Evangelical Churches*. The title of the volume in which these two essays are bound is, *Two Much-Needed Little Books against the Papacy*.[32]

The full title of Meisner's little book says much about the work itself: *A Catholic Answer to the Heretical Question of the Society against Jesus (the Jesuits): 'Where were the True Religion and Church before the Time of Luther?' -- to all Evangelical Christians under the Oppression of the Papacy.*

Walch states that the question attributed here to the Jesuits was first brought forth by the humanists Cochlaeus and Pighius, making it, therefore, not *originally* a Jesuit question at all,[33] as some might understand Meisner's title. We may note that Meisner does not specifically claim that the question originates with the Jesuits, and it is certainly reasonable that they should use such a question to their advantage

[31] *Der Geist der Lutherischen Theologen Wittenbergs*, op. cit., p. 96.

[32] *Zwei Hochnuetzlicher Buecher wider das Papstthum*, Leipzig, Friedrich Lanckschens Erben, 1697.

[33] ibid.

when they came across it. Yet the author does credit the Jesuits with developing the argumentation behind the question early in the essay.

The use of the word "Catholic" opens the door for a brief discussion of ecclesiology, which is really the most critical topic in Meisner's tract, for the whole work answers the question of where the Church is located and of what it consists. Meisner uses the word "Catholic" in the title to denote the view which is now known to us as "Lutheran," and applies the term, "heretical" to the church of the Papacy. This should inform our understanding of how the Lutherans of this era viewed themselves and their relation to the church of the Papacy. Throughout the work Meisner approaches his task from the understanding that the Papacy is the aberration and the Lutherans are the orthodox Christians, as there have always been, who hold the faith of the True Apostolic Church. Therefore, already in the title we can see the final course of Meisner's answer to the question of the Jesuits. With this perspective the main point of the entire work may be summed-up rather simply: Alhough the marks and signs of the true Church have always been present under the Papacy, they *define* the Church for both the Apostles and the Lutherans.

There is no sense of including other Protestants under the umbrella of the term, "Catholic." In spite of Meisner's recourse to rallying historical examples which were anything but Lutheran, the term "Catholic" denotes only the group of Protestants who followed the tenets of the *Lutheran* reform movement. Here we must observe that any unity of the Saxon Lutherans with other Protestants, whether doctrinally or politically, was simply not present at the time of the writing of Meisner's book. A certain military unity among the Protestants was soon to come in the later stages of the Thirty Years' War, and the camaraderie spawned by alliances against the Catholic armies was to have its effect theologically as well. The Lutheran Pietist movement of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was infused with a certain pan-Protestant ideology from its inception. Philip Jakob

Spener's *Pia Desideria*,[34] which initiated the Pietist movement, speaks hopefully of a union of the Protestant confessions around the Bible[35] but sets forth a clear dichotomy between the various Protestants and all things Catholic.[36] However, Meisner's work is prior to the military alliances out of which Spener's sentiments grew, and a different sense of who and what makes up the true (catholic) Church is clearly operative.

There is not the slightest attempt in Meisner's tract to soft-peddle the Lutheran view of the Sacraments or allow for diverging Protestant views. Meisner readily acknowledges the contemporary presence of true Christians in the Papacy when he is citing examples in the second part of his tract, but no attempt is ever made to rally the views of any other Protestants to the defense of his thesis, though no theologian of the time would deny that there were individual Christians also among the Calvinists and the Reformed. There were two sides to the earthly manifestation of the Church in Meisner's ecclesiology -- there was the Church under the darkness of the Papacy, and the Church which had emerged in the light of the Lutheran Reformation. The Calvinists and other "Reformed" fit into neither group. This is not to suggest that the Lutherans desired to identify more with the Roman Church at this time than with the Reformed. Robert Preus points-out in his *Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism* that both Rome and the Reformed were equally considered "false religions" by the Lutheran theologians of this era.[37] On the other side, the Lutheran theologians would also acknowledge the presence of individual Christians equally among both the Romans and the Calvinists, but the two groups could not be equally considered "Church." It was the strong Lutheran emphasis on sacraments and the bodily Presence of Christ in the Eucharist which prevented the Calvinists from sharing the title. According to the classical and received Lutheran

[34] op. cit.
[35] Peter C. Erb, ed., *Pietists: Selected Writings*, New York, Paulist Press, 1983. p. 39
[36] Cf. ibid. introduction, p. 6.
[37] vol. 1, St. Louis, Concordia, 1970. p. 214.

definition, the Church, as an assembly, was identified by adherence to the Gospel, and right use of the Sacraments.[38] This could be formally found in the Roman Church, but not, according to the Lutheran definition, among the Calvinists who neither understood the sacraments rightly, nor used them rightly.

Meisner's title also tells us that he was familiar with the writings of Martin Chemnitz against the Jesuits, for the word he uses for "Jesuit" is "*Jesuwider*," which literally means, "against Jesus." This is a usage invented by Chemnitz in the satirical first chapter of *Theologiae Iesuitarum*.[39] Meisner recalls Chemnitz' work at many points throughout his essay. Discussions of the various abuses of Papal doctrine, for example, follow the same logical development, and summarize well the discussion of Chemnitz on the very same points, either in the *Theologiae Jesuitarum,* or in the *Examination*. Writing a full sixty years after Chemnitz' *Theologiae Jesuitarum* Meisner has a great deal more history to deal with than did Chemnitz. Events and arguments from the time after the Council of Trent figure prominently in Meisner's tract, and dealing with them constitutes his original contribution to a basic outline which is not his own.

The final phrase of the title reveals the Meisner's intended audience: *all Evangelical Christians under the Oppression of the Papacy.* First of all, this reinforces Meisner's point that the Church has always existed in the very midst of the Papacy, though the institution of the papal office was regarded by Meisner as aberrant, and

[38] According to the authoritative Augsburg Confession of 1530 the "Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered. And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments." -- Article vii. (H.E. Jacobs, tr., *The Book of Concord* Philadelphia, Board of Publication of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, 1908.) According to the Lutheran sacramental understanding this would be possible under the Papacy and impossible among the Reformed. For a proper understanding of the use of this passage it is helpful to consult the employment of this definition in Melanchthon's *Loci Communes*, op. cit., p. 131.

[39] Meisner goes on to use this term exclusively for the Jesuits throughout the document. I didn't bother to translate it that way except for the title page, because the usage distracts greatly from the logical flow of the argument in the points Meisner is making.

often in opposition to the true Church. Secondly, this tells us that the work is not a doctrinal treatise but a tract for the laity -- "all Evangelical Christians." As such it was also quite popular. In a publisher's preface to the 1697 double edition the printer writes:

> It is but a little while since these books were in such demand that they could not be procured at any book-seller's. Thus it was deemed advisable to print these books afresh forthwith, that the Christian reader might be satisfied, and might find bound together in this double text of two highly celebrated theologians, everything that was otherwise set-forth at length in larger works. These he may employ for his need in guarding against the abomination of the Papacy. Thus may God bless the reader and give him grace through Christ!

Notes on the Translation

The work of translation was complicated by Meisner's use of colloquial figures of speech as well as the differences between the High German of the early seventeenth century and modern High German. These differences were not so striking at the level of syntax, which was, except for certain colloquialisms and quotes, very much according to the formal grammatical rules of the German language, which is not surprising in the environment of a German university in the Post-Reformation era. Regardless of what our modern opinion of prescriptive grammar may be, it was very much *en vogue* in Meisner's time, and his work reflects this.

Greater difficulties were found at the semantic level, for here there was the burden of sifting back through the various shades of meaning which the words had acquired over the centuries to determine the sense and connotation of the words in the German of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Toward this end, three works in particular were constantly consulted in the translation process: 1) The *Fruehneuhochdeutsches Glossar* of Alfred Goetze,[40] 2) Dietz' *Worterbuch zu Dr. Martin Luthers Deutschen Schriften*,[41] and 3) (for etymology) the extensive work of E.G. Graff, *Althochdeutscher Sprachschatz*.[42] Where necessary or helpful references have been made in the footnotes to the meanings of certain words in the original German text.

Concerning the Methodology of the Footnotes in General:

The annotations in the text itself are intended to clarify the points made by Meisner and their connection with the work in general by adding historical, rhetorical, and linguistic context. In most cases all of the bibliographic works relevant to the topic of the footnote were meticulously consulted, and only the most

[40]Berlin, Walter DeGruyter & Co., 1960.
[41] Leipzig, F.C.W. Vogel, 1870.
[42]Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963.

pertinent entries were cited. However, a conscious attempt was also made to avoid tangential discussion by giving more consideration to the notations which elucidate Meisner's main points, and less to the supporting points. Thus, for example, when Meisner is giving examples of emperors and kings who have defied the Pope, more space and consideration is given to the discussion of Henry IV who is central to Meisner's discussion, than to the Kings of England, who serve to reinforce the main argument.

All Biblical references are listed exactly as they were in the 1697 text.

A Catholic Answer to the Heretical Question of the Society Against Jesus (The Jesuits): "Where were the True Religion and Church before the Time of Luther?"

To all Evangelical Christians under the Oppression of the Papacy

Anno 1623

Set forth by
Balthasar Meissner
Doctor of the Holy Scriptures
and Professor in Wittenberg.

Question: "Where were the true Religion and Church before the time of Luther?"

It is the practice of the Pope, and particularly of the Jesuits, that when it has pleased them to lead simple hearts away from the Evangelical Truth they dispute very little from the Holy Scriptures, but rather bring forth various cunning questions which give an outward show, but have nothing whatever behind them. This is only to the end that saintly Christians might be led away from the written Word of God and brought down in elaborate, unnecessary discourse.

Such a question is also the one that is before us, from which they know how to derive much show and renown. Thus they say: "The Christian Church has the promise that she should remain through all time and the Gates of Hell shall not overcome her. (Matthew 16:18) However, she cannot stand without the true Faith. From this it follows that even as the Church has existed through all time, so also the proper Religion must also remain on earth at all times. Show us, however, you Lutherans, where was your religion found before the time of Luther? Name for us a land, name for us one single city, name for us many or even a few people that were devoted to each and every article of your Faith. On this you must be speechless and you can answer nothing. On the other hand, our Papal religion has spread itself throughout the entire world. The Roman church alone had a place before Luther. There is no other faith preached and heard in the entirety of Christendom, in any area, than the Roman faith alone. Therefore we can conclude with certainty that our church must be the Apostolic Church, and our faith the proper Catholic Faith. Therefore, it cannot in any way be glossed-over that either the Christian Church in its entirety completely covered-up the Truth before the beginning of the era of Luther (which runs contrary to the Divine promise), or on

the other hand, the Lutheran church was to be found at all times, (which runs contrary to experience and history)."

This is the Jesuit discourse with which many simple Christians have become infatuated, and mistakes have been made. To the best of my ability I will sketch-out the main points of contention with this discourse, only briefly touching the points myself, without drawing them out elaborately, because it has already come about apart from my work that this question was overwhelmingly answered long ago[43], and it is no longer worthy to honor with a long treatment.

I will rather, take it upon myself, through God's help, doubly to prove:

First, that the question before us is not worth much consideration, and no-one should fret himself over it, much less become a Papist because of it.

Second, that though a false argument is worthy of almost no answer at all, nevertheless, we can very easily and superabundantly demonstrate where the true Church and Religion were preserved before Luther.

The First Part of the Answer:
That the Proposed Question is not worth consideration, and is worthy of almost no Answer at all.

The Apostle Paul wrote unto his disciple Timothy the following rule in the second chapter of the second epistle, verse 23, "Get rid of the foolish and useless questions, because you know that they only bring-forth contention."

[43]This assertion would seem to suggest that Balduin's work preceded Meisner's, as an answer to that question which was posed in the introduction. Meisner may also have in mind the work of Chemnitz and others, but we certainly should recognize the rhetorical strategy here. The statement functions within the argument to suggest weakness in the Jesuits' argument which he will elaborate later. Effectively, Meisner is establishing the ground for asserting that his references stand on their own, were the Jesuits to consider them.

Were the Jesuits to bear such a rule in mind thy would keep their proposed question very much to themselves. For this is truly a foolish and useless question which only brings-forth contention, and it has nothing solid behind it. In order that this might be clearly demonstrated and rightly understood, the Christian reader will wish to consider the following short points:

First of all, the question of the Jesuits is a futile question, and one of little benefit, since if I wished to give no answer to it it would still do no harm to my salvation, and if I already know how to answer in regard to it, it yet benefits my salvation but little.

Ignorance does no harm, since it is enough for me that I am certain of what I should believe from the Holy Scriptures and the clear marks on the page, if I have not known explicitly where and in which locations the Christian Church has been at all times. For when I show from article to article that the Lutheran Faith is in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, this is enough. And it follows naturally that the same faith has always been in the world because the Truth does not disappear even if I am not particularly aware in which location and under which persons this faith was preserved. Everyone brought to see that the true faith is formed from the Holy Scriptures may have enough with that and be certain of his salvation, even if he is unable to show who has believed before him. "The righteous lives by his faith," says Habakkuk 2:4. When therefore everyone looks to God's Word, and from it, as from the only means, acquires the faith, this is already enough, and it is not equally necessary that he has himself received much concerning what and how other persons and his forefathers believed. For whoever has the proper faith is certainly saved, and the ignorance of where the true believers were cannot harm him.

Likewise, therefore, it is also of little benefit toward salvation if I do already know who has believed before me since I must still check every religion against the

Holy Scriptures and see if they are in agreement. It does not follow at all that since a certain religion has been taught for so many hundred years together that it is therefore true, since it would then follow that the opinions of the Jews and Turks were also true because they have been propagated and preserved in the same manner, for many hundreds of years consecutively. Thus, therefore, it bears little that is useful, and there is really nothing on which to lay a foundation, if I already know that a religion was carried-on in many countries and through many consecutive centuries; because the Greeks, the Jews, the Turks, and the heathen can all glory in this in like manner.[44] Rather, it is much more critical that one test every faith against the plumbline of the Holy Scriptures than that one should obtain much concerning where and from whom such faith was received. Because the one provides certainty and is useful, while the other does no harm when one does not know, and it helps but little when one has come to know it.

All of this can be very well explained with a common allegory: For a long time in a certain country nothing other or better than crude copper coins was used. God, however, gave a saintly man the grace that he should find an old and good silver coin, on which, however, the province in which they were struck and in vogue was not printed. None would be so foolish that he would prefer the copper coins and reject the silver only because the former was long in use and of the other one knew nothing about in what location they were in use and who actually used them. So if one did not know all of this beforehand it is yet of no harm as long as the old recovered coins stand the proper test and are minted out of pure, good

[44]The rhetorical style of Meisner must be recognized here as well. These examples are not considered equal, but rather build toward the absurd. Thus the "Greeks" or the Eastern Orthodox exemplify true Christians who also have a long history, while the Jews, Turks, and heathen prove that more is required as a test of orthodoxy than merely endurance. We should avoid seeing criticism of the Eastern Church at this point. For we may note that Meisner later uses the "Greeks" as an example of the true Church which opposed the Pope before Luther.

silver.[45] What is the necessity that one obtain much on where they were struck and were previously valued? This allegory lends itself well to application to the condition of the Roman church. The same has equally false copper coins struck out of a medley of human statutes and they are particularly long in use, here and there. However, God gave Dr. Luther the grace that he found again the good old silver coin of the Apostolic faith, and brought it back in vogue, which teaching passes the proper test when one compares it with the Holy Scriptures. However, that is not enough for the Papists, they would not receive the special, noble treasure and costly coin of the Truth. Were they to similarly regard the test it would only be when one had already answered for them: "Where and in what province was such a coin previously in use and in vogue?" Is this not a truly useless and unnecessary question that is not worthy to honor with an answer? It is indeed overwhelmingly enough that the Lutheran teaching stands the test of the Holy Scriptures, even if we have not previously explicitly shown when and where the same was preserved through the papal darkness.

In the second place, the question is truly cunning, for it is only to see the result that therewith one carries-away Evangelical hearts from the Holy Bible and can conceal the heinous Papal errors under the mantle of ancient usage. The cunning foxes, the Jesuits, know full well that when it comes to the inquiry of the Holy Scriptures their teachings burn as quickly as a strawstack and vanish. Therefore they are in fear of the Bible; therefore they would not give it to the common man that he might read the Holy Scriptures at home and studiously reflect

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[45] Meisner's allegory is quite contemporary to the events of his day. In the early years of the 17th Century the rumor of war caused governments to gather in whatever silver they could find in order to finance their defenses. The Silver was bought with newly minted copper coinage, which was later known as "light money" for it's lack of buying power in international markets. Many common folk, however, secreted away their silver, knowing, as Meisner's analogy states, that the silver would always be worth more. (Cf.Herbert Langer, *The Thirty Years' War*, Poole, Dorset U.K., Blandford, 1980. pp. 28-30)

on them. John Eck,[46] the famous Papal theologian at Ingolstadt, himself confessed: "One may well refute the Lutheran religion from the ancient fathers, but not from the Holy Scriptures." Albertus Pighius laments very much that one must begin a dispute with Luther from the Holy Scriptures (1. *de Eccles. Hier. c. 4*)[47]. Herewith it is clearly shown that our teaching has a good and solid ground in the Bible.

Now this is not credited by the Jesuits, for when they seek to advance their Papal opinion they do not begin with the Bible. Thereupon is a deep silence. Rather they make a great prattle over the name "Catholic," over the succession of the priests, over the miracles of the saints, over the unity and long standard[48] of their churches, and whatever other babble there is. If, now, an Evangelical Christian hears these things he should immediately remember that this is a single cunning little point, and it is of Satan's administration. He will gladly take the Bible from us

[46]Eck, Johann, d. 1543, particularly famous in Protestant history for his debates with Luther and his contemporaries, particularly Karlstadt. Prior to the posting of the 95 Theses he was on friendly terms with Luther. Eck was a specialist in debate, and so it is not surprising that he was considered the victor in the famous Leipzig debate with Luther of 1519, though this judgment was not entirely conclusive. Eck's direct and skillful campaign against Luther both on paper and in debate makes this statement quoted by Meisner all the more remarkable. (Cf. Hauck, Albert, *Realenzyklopaedie fuer Protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, v. 5. pp. 138-142, & Jedin, & Dolan, [ed.], *History of the Church; vol. 5: Reformation and Counter-Reformation*, also much primary material from Eck himself is quoted in Dau, W.H.T., *The Leipzig Debate in 1519*, St. Louis, Concordia, 1919.) However, Meisner's citation is not referenced, and after much consultation I am unable to find it anywhere else. Such a statement on the part of Eck would be tremendously significant, if found, for it runs thoroughly contrary to the points repeatedly made in the Confutation, of which Eck was the principle driving-force (Cf. Reu, J.M., *The Augsburg Confession*, Chicago, Wartburg Publishing House, 1930. Historical introduction, pp. 124f, and pp. 326-383.)

[47]Albert Pigge was a Dutch theologian and humanist, born in 1490 in Campen, and died 1542 in Utrecht. The work which Meisner cites was a well-known and extensive defense of the Papal dogma against Protestantism. From this work he may be credited with contributing greatly to the development of the doctrine of Papal infallibility. (*History of the Church; vol. 5: Reformation and Counter-Reformation*, p. 199., & *Lexikon fuer Theologie und Kirche*,vol. 8, p. 502) Chemnitz also cites this assertion from Pighius in the *Examen* (op. cit., vol. 1, p. 46).

[48]Difficult to translate in context. "Wahrung," in the colloquial, implies a monetary standard, as in the "gold standard," or the "silver standard." This usage no doubt ties in with his previous allegory. Thus the reference here is not to the endurance of the churches, but the endurance of the merit system which Meisner before compared with the copper coins.

with certain little arguments, and tear from our hands the bright Word of God on which our teaching rests. For he well knows that he cannot mislead us when we direct our thoughts to the revealed Word alone, which abundantly shows that the Papal faith is wrong and cannot endure.

For example:[49]

A simple person can easily understand that the teaching of purgatory is entirely void and invented. For he does not find a single letter about it in the Holy Scriptures. There are rather only two places which are taught, Heaven and hell, into which the souls of the dead are brought immediately.

Whoever reads the institution of Holy Communion may contemplate that the Lord Christ gave not only bread to eat but also wine to drink when he said to all mature Christians in the persons of the Apostles: "Eat and drink all of it, this do in remembrance of Me." And it is easily understood that it is as wrong when one robs the simple Christians of the blessed Kingdom as of one part of the Holy Communion.

Whoever searches in the Holy Scriptures immediately finds passages which state that one should worship God alone, and also place hope and trust in Him alone. Therefore it must be wrong when the Papists would also have it that one should invoke the dead saints and place hope in their petitions and aid. For in the Holy Scriptures one finds neither command, nor example or promise thereunto.

The mass is regarded as the highest divine service in the Papacy and yet not one single passage is found in which it is ordered that the Life of Christ is to be

[49]Meisner's examples here are quite similar in form to the points made by Chemnitz in his brief work, *Theologia Jesuitarum* (op. cit.) with which we know he was familiar. Chemnitz' *Examination of the Council of Trent* contains arguments which also parallel these in rhetorical methodology. This is, then, one of the sections which seems to be just a brief summary of Chemnitz, as mentioned in the introduction.

sacrificed in the Supper.[50] One also does not have the least promise that merely hearing the mass is profitable for the forgiveness of our sins. On what, then, is one to rely and base his faith?

Paul writes plainly in I Cor. 7:9, "It is better to be married than to suffer passion." And I Tim. 3:5 says: "A bishop should be the husband of one wife, having obedient children." With this Paul indicates clearly enough that marriage is not forbidden to priests. Again, this also must be wrong in the Papal church.

Paul also writes often that no one can become righteous through the works of the Law, and yet it is said among the papists that good works earn righteousness, and one may place his hope in them.

It is a principal article of the Roman religion that the pope is the viceroy[51] of the Lord Christ and the successor of the Apostle Peter. But where in the entire Scriptures does one find a single jot about this? And yet we are all supposed to believe what the pope prescribes for us to believe, as if God Himself had said it.

They teach that no person can be certain of obtaining forgiveness of sins and having become a child of the eternal Righteousness. This is indeed a terrible teaching that throws down all the power of the Sacraments, Absolution, and the Promises, and brings with it great sadness and despair, that all which is given by God for our strong trust and steadfast strengthening should offer but a tenuous certainty.

All of this is so crystal clear, therefore, that every single Christian may very easily understand in these and similar articles all that which is true and to be believed. The infernal fiend knows this very well. Therefore he exerts himself through the Jesuits that he might lead us away, little-by-little, from the diligent

[50]It should be noted that this is the issue whenever the "mass" is referenced and condemned in this document. Meisner had no contention with liturgy or public services, but with the idea of re-sacrifice and other abominations in the Roman mass.

[51]From the German, "Statthalter," referring to a medieval governor, that is, one who reigns in the stead of an absent prince.

contemplation of the Divine Word and the Papal abomination; making a chatter among us from the long-standing and widely distributed Roman Church, wishing to know from us where our teaching was before the time of Luther -- and whatever similar sophistry. Therefore take note of this little artwork of Satan, you evangelical Christians. Do not let yourselves be fooled by certain general conclusions, under which is hidden all of the Papal error. Stay by the Word of God because it is the "Lamp of our feet" (Psalm 119:105) which provides us with certainty and strong trust. Search in the Scriptures wherein you will find the Life eternal (John 5:39). Check one article of the Papal religion after another against God's Word and see, before you unite yourselves with the papists in all things, which religion the Scriptures agree with. Thus the question will answer itself very well as to how and where the Christian religion was preserved.

Therefore this is the best advice: if you encounter a Jesuit with the proposed question, then set question against question and say: "Tell me where it is commanded in God's Word that I should invoke the saints, believe in Purgatory, hear a mass, become righteous through good works, receive the Supper under one Kind, support a crusade, or similar things?" Let the Jesuit dispute with you any of a number of articles from the Holy Scriptures. Thus you will have already won half, and can quickly stop-up his muzzle. He will not do it, and will only attempt evasion: "The Scriptures are difficult to understand, the Bible is a heretic's book, everyone twists them as he wishes, one must search-out their interpretation in the fathers and in the councils."[52] He will accept the Scriptures, "but as the Roman Church understands them. Otherwise one has no guide, one should listen to the Pope, he does not err, etc." Just so he already counsels himself. You can see the showing-forth of the well-prepared claws of the evil Fiend. He will gladly lead you away

[52]An opinion of the Jesuits mentioned by Chemnitz in *Theologia Jesuitarum* [Antonij Bertrami, 1602]. This is also discussed at length by Hunnius in the book which is bound together with our work, [*Zwei Hochnuetzliche Buecher wieder das Papstthum*, Leipzig, Friederich Lanckischens Erben, 1697.]

from God's Word, the sole means unto Righteousness, which is clear enough and is thus given to us that we might understand it and test all things against it. Thereupon he therefore twists and defends himself. Thus it is also not worthwhile that one should answer his stale, cunning question -- since he has already beforehand disagreed with you on every article from the Holy Scriptures which alone provide certainty.

In the third place it is also a shameless question, since they know very well how the Pope hid the true faith before Luther and suppressed the Truth with craft and might, and also destroyed most of those books which opposed him. For this reason they are so shameless with their questions and wish to know concisely who practiced our faith while they are not unaware how the true believers were hidden and slaughtered. If a tyrannical government had for a long time bound the muzzle of its subjects so that they might not openly speak against the dominant tyranny, or they must withdraw completely from the land, will it not raise many questions if afterward one can also name someone many years ago who found fault with something in the government? Then everyone would perceive[53] this as a great fraud and a shameless embellishment.[54] In exactly the same way is renown created with the Papists because they know that in the thick darkness the Truth was eclipsed and saintly Christians had to hide themselves. Therefore they boast so shamelessly of their question of where the Christian Church was openly maintained before the time of Luther.

Concerning this it should be enough for all peace-loving and steadfast Christians that we demonstrate and incontrovertibly prove our teaching from the

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[53]German, "Merken." This is translated as it is because of the underlying meaning which was strongly borne by the word particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries according to Goetze, Alfred, *Fruhneuhochdeutsches Glossar*, Berlin,Walter de Gruyter & co., 1960. pp. 158-59.

[54]The German here "beschoenen," refers to that which is painted in a better light than was true. The idea here is that of revisionist history on the part of the one who did the naming.

clear Word of God. Nevertheless, the Jesuits will not be content with it, and will also rather not recognize our teaching as being right and Christian. It must be that one show them first where the same was maintained before Luther: which is, then, a truly shameless point, nothing other than were one not to believe that the Hebrew Bible is the true Bible because one cannot show with certainty where and in which location the same was concealed and preserved during the Babylonian captivity.[55]

In the fourth place, it is a truly pharisaical question, because the Jesuits now put forth nearly the same argument against the true religion as the Pharisees put forth against Christ and the Apostles in former times. The Pharisees considered the true religion to be new (Mark 1:27). They also would not receive it because through it their ancient custom and the treatises of the fathers were rejected. From these, on account of their antiquity and long usage, they doubtless made much fame, even as the modern Jesuits. They also employed the same discourse and questions: "Tell us, you Apostles where has someone taught thus before this age, who was there before Jesus the crucified who humbled Himself in order to overturn the Law of Moses, and circumcision, and other usages? We sit in the seat of Moses. The power and understanding is given to us to interpret the writings of the prophets. Our synagogue and teaching has lasted for many consecutive centuries. No one has ever taught other than we teach concerning the Kingdom of the Messiah, concerning righteousness, or concerning the interpretation of the Ten Commandments. Therefore either our religion is the true one, or it would follow that for a long time there was no true Church and no true faith to be found on earth, because no one heard from anything other than our Pharisaical teaching. Otherwise name for us the area, and name for us the people, which before our time

[55]The analogy of the Roman Church to Babylon is implied here, a common Lutheran understanding and interpretation of the Revelation of St. John since Luther's *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. Later Meisner will refer to the Revelation of St. John in explaining the flight of the Church from the Beast, also expressing the Lutheran understanding of the application of the Apocalypse to the Church of Rome.

have agreed with you and rejected our opinion. We do not care about your miracles, because the false prophets can also work wonders, and this is a certain mark that demonstrates fraud, when the miracles occur to confirm a new and entirely unheard-of teaching which runs against the old Mosaic Religion, etc."

In this and similar ways the Pharisees of old most certainly disputed against the Apostles and their teaching. What the Jesuits now answer to the objections of the Pharisees, we will send the very same back home to them on their question. However, there is nothing more convenient for one to answer than that it is enough that the teaching of the Apostles agrees uniformly with the prophets' prophecies and Scriptures, and that there were also certainly pious Jews to be found at all times who did not consent to the errors of the Pharisees, even if one is then unable to name expressly the location or persons, or methodically recount this history. In the same way we also say that one should be quite satisfied with the fact that our religion is in agreement with the Holy Scriptures and therefore, without doubt, the same has been practiced at all times by some, even if, on account of the tyranny and persecution of the pope, it was heretofore unknown and had no public exercise.

In the fifth place, the proposed question can yield no strong and certain conclusion. For if we cannot explicitly name the location of the ancient Church and the orthodox persons, it still does not follow that there was, therefore, no true Church before Luther. For a thing can be true and have been maintained, though one was previously unaware of where and how it was maintained. *Ab ignorantia sei ad negotionem rei non licet argumentari* -- "From not knowing to not being one cannot proceed," as the scholars say. If I were to deny that a Paradise ever existed since no one can exactly show where it was, would not everyone regard this as a void and shameless argument? Thus it certainly does not follow that no spiritual Paradise, no Christian Church, existed before Luther simply because we could not, up to now, pin a name on the location; particularly because the orthodox were not together in

a single location, but were rather scattered here and there, they lived not in a peaceful state, but rather under the tyranny and persecution of the Pope.

The prophet Elijah also thought that he was the only one of the faithful remaining from the Kingdom of Israel, because he did not know the other God-fearing Jews.[56] These others also could not know, because they were oppressed and had to conceal themselves. Nevertheless, there was still a Church in the midst of the apostate Kingdom of Israel, since God Himself said so (I Kings, 10:18). He would let seven thousand remain in Israel, namely, all those knees that did not bend themselves to Baal, and all the mouths that had not kissed him. Then as now, the conclusion of Elijah was worth nothing before the Divine Majesty: "I, Elijah, know of no location where there is the true Divine Service, and also no person who is not compelled to follow Baal; therefore in all of Israel there is no longer any true Church." Even so the argument of the Jesuits is weak when they say that before Luther there were no orthodox people, or people who were averse to the Papal horror, simply because one cannot give their names and name the location in which these resided. It is indeed enough that we know that the Apostolic Church remains at all times and that the gates of Hell cannot prevail against it (Matt. 16:18); and that also the Lord Christ promised that He would remain with us unto the end of the world (Matt. 28 the last verse). On the power of this promise we are certain that God, the Lord, also preserved His true little flock of sheep, His seven thousand,

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[56]The example of Elijah is rhetorically important because it establishes that Meisner is not merely defending the simple, and certainly not condoning willful ignorance. If the great prophet Elijah was unaware of who the other believers were, though for his own comort he wished to know, then we must concede that it is possible for the best scholars as well as the smallest child to be ignorant until God grants the comforting blessing of knowledge. The fact that anyone is capable of being ignorant of that which is hidden is critical for recognizing Meisner's point that the question itself proves nothing. It is worthwhile to also consider the ignorance of Job. Although Job was not stupid and contemplated long on the reason for his suffering, God had not given that to him to know, and ignorance of what one cannot possibly know cannot be faulted. Thus we see the sensibility of the Latin principle cited above.

even as in the Kingdom of Israel, even if we, just like Elijah, do not know them or their names.

In the sixth and last place, this question, and the entire argument based on it, proceeds from a false hypothesis and opinion which the Papists imagine, and of which they would persuade everyone, namely that the Christian Church must be at all times apparent to such a degree that one may name the location where it resided, as well as the persons, in such a manner that one can clearly differentiate them from others. It must be as evident as the French Kingdom or the City of Venice, concerning which one knows very well in which location it is, and with what people it is found, as Bellarmine writes in *de Ecclesia*, book 3 chapter 2.[57]

That this is entirely incorrect and that the Christian Church now and then loses her appearance[58], so that it is as if it were invisible -- she may hide herself and disperse here and there -- can very easily be demonstrated and proven, partly from the prophecies of Divine Scripture, and partly from a great many examples which present themselves in the Old and New Testaments.

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[57]A work by Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), a Jesuit teacher with Augustinian training that served him well as an opponent of Lutheranism, which also had Augustinian roots. For his era, Bellarmine was the foremost leader of the Counter-Reformation, obtaining the rank of Cardinal in 1599. His most famous work is entitled, *Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei*, which is a rather detailed polemic against the Protestants, not much different in scope from Chemnitz' *Examen*, though it is considerably larger in size, and comments on the "heresies" of the Lutherans rather than the "heresies" of Trent. The particular work which Meisner cites is not mentioned in any of the general modern lists of Bellarmine's works, and thus it is quite possible that Meisner is actually referring to one of the sections of *Disputationes de controversiis...* which deals with the locus of the Church. These may be found particularly in the *Bellarmini Opera Omnia*, vols. 2-3, assembled by Justinus Fevre, (Paris 1870, nachdruck, Frankfurt, Minerva G.M.B.H., 1965). Though I was unable to find such an exact mention of the earthly perspicuity of the Church being similar to France or Venice, there are many places where as much is implied. It is possible that Meisner's numbering of the volumes is different from that which was used by Fevre as well. {Cf. Jedin, & Dolan, [ed.], *History of the Church; vol. 5: Reformation and Counter-Reformation*, p. 539f., *Theologische Realenzyklopaedie*, vol. 5, p. 525-533., *Realenzyklopaedie fuer Protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 2, p. 549-555.}

[58]German, "Schein" -- implies more than what we would understand as "appearance." The word can be used to refer to the "shining-forth" of Epiphany, according to its etymology (Cf. Graff, *Althochdeutsches Sprachschatz*)

That which the *Vaticinia*[59] or prophecies set-forth with our dear Savior Himself proclaimed in Luke 18:8, that when He should come, namely in the Judgment, there would be almost no faith to be found on the earth. However, He is not merely referring to the *fidem miraculorum*, that is the faith to do wonders, of which Paul speaks in 1Cor. 13:1, but rather to the *fidem articulorum*, the faith of assenting to the proper teaching, of which He also prophesied in Matthew 24:11-24, saying that false prophets would raise themselves up and would lead many away into error, including the elect, where it is possible. If however, the Christian Church should be flourishing, obvious, and growing at all times, as the Papists assert, then there can be no room or place for the prophecy of Christ, that he will find almost no faith on earth. Thus the Apostle Paul prophesied concerning a common Apostasy (2Thess. 2:3), which will occur in the last times (1Tim. 4:1). Therefore also the *Pontificii Remenses*[60] writes: *Paulo ante finem mundi externus status ecclesiae cessabit apostasia passim obtinebit*: that is, shortly before the end of the world the outward condition of the Church (that which exists in public exercise) will be cut off, and the Apostasy will win the upper hand, which is nothing other than that the Christian Church should become invisible. In the same way John, in his Revelation prophesied that the woman, or the Christian Church must flee into the wilderness (Rev. 12:6) that she should be conveyed from the beast that lives on the earth (ch. 12:14), and those who did not worship the image of the beast would be killed (13:15). From all of this it is sufficiently shown that the Christian Church under the Anti-Christ should have been so oppressed that she must conceal herself, and hide here and there.

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[59]Latin for "prophecies."

[60]There is also no mention of a work by this name in any encyclopaedic literature. Neither is it mentioned in Papal histories, nor is such a title found in the libraries at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend. Meisner would seem to be referring to a Papal document, possibly a book of liturgical rite or a history, based on the meaning of the Latin.

The examples arrive at the same conclusions which are known sufficiently from the [prophesies of the] Holy Scriptures. Where was the obvious and open Church as at Mount Sinai the entire company of the people grew lukewarm and worshiped the molded calf (Ex. 32)? Where was the true Divine Service openly in use in the Kingdom of Israel at Elijah's time? Where and in what place were the orthodox during the many years of the time of the Pharisees before Christ would come in the flesh to meet them? Name the place and the persons which did not openly incorporate the terrible errors of the Pharisees into their teaching. No one can show any of that, and yet it does not follow, for that reason, that under the Apostasies of Aaron's and Elijah's time or under the company of Pharisees before the birth of Christ there were no saintly and God-given hearts in which the true Church was able to be preserved. For particularly at the time of the Pharisees there was no longer any public Religion in vogue other than that of the Pagans and the false Jewish, or Pharisaical, against which the Lord Christ often levelled His sermons, and showed sufficiently that they were false and led away from Heaven. It follows thereupon that either there was entirely and completely no true Church remaining at that time, or that the orthodox hid under the company of the Pharisees and therefore there was an invisible Church. Various forms may be known from Church history -- how under the ten persecutions the Christians were oppressed and therefore often had no public exercise. And one can also show no certain place that they preserved themselves. Rather, they partly crept into the wilderness, partly hid themselves in caves, and partly were hidden in the midst of the heathen. Likewise when at the time of the Arian Heresy[61] all the world followed the same crowd, the truly Catholic Christians were persecuted, and were not allowed to remain in any particular place.

[61]Meisner chooses an example which serves his point well. Over against the Papal assertion of a catholic church, organized, unified, and as visible as an empire, the example of the Arians shows that it is equally possible for the official religion of such an empire to be heresy. (The entire course of this history is laid-out concisely in the various sections on Arianism in *History of the Church*, vol. 2)

Therefore it incontrovertibly follows from this that the Christian Church occasionally becomes invisible, particularly at the time of the universal persecution. And however the same tyranny was practiced in the darkened Papacy, everyone indeed can see that the question of the Jesuits is a truly unnecessary and shameless question, when they wish us to name expressly the place and persons where which our teaching occurred. Because such a question applies only to the visible Church, when she is in good condition, having free public exercise, which the Pope forbade and prevented with great might to all who would not receive his authority. Accordingly, when someone asks after the location of the oppressed Church in the Papacy, it is just as vacuous as if someone were to ask where to meet and see that which is hidden and invisible. Then these run contrary to one another: to be oppressed and invisible and then to be openly shown in a place.

Thus the question which the Jesuits have forwarded is thoroughly answered, as we briefly have established: 1) That the question is vain, because it harms nothing when one does not already know how to answer, and profits but little if one can already answer it, 2) That it is a cunning question only forwarded for the purpose that we might be led away from the contemplation of the Holy Scriptures and in particular the Papal horror, 3) That it is a shameless question because they know that the Pope oppressed the orthodox, and apart from this question it is enough that we demonstrate our teaching from the Holy Scriptures, 4) That it is a Pharisaical question because it is exactly the same as those which were thrown before the Apostles, 5) That it gives no strong and certain conclusion, because it does not follow that there was no Church merely because we don't already know in which place it was, 6) That it is a question based on the false supposition that the Church was at all times obvious and known, since just the opposite can be proved very easily with prophecies and examples.

The Second Part of the Answer:
That one may abundantly show how and where the true Church and Religion were preserved before the time of Luther.

Everything under this heading proceeds in a twofold way:

First: We look at how our Apostolic Faith was preserved in the Papacy.

Second: We consider who were the members of the true Church.

To the first consideration we may give a short answer: That our Apostolic Faith was preserved in the Bible, or Holy Scripture, in all ages. For we have fabricated no new teaching, but rather studied the same from God's Word, as it is easy to prove from article to article. For it is incontrovertible that the true Catholic Religion is written in the Bible, and, though through Divine Providence, this Holy Bible was also preserved in the midst of the Papacy. It follows incontrovertibly that the Truth, or the Apostolic Faith, was never lost, nor did it entirely disappear. In order to understand this the more we offer a special concluding discourse:

Where the Bible remains there is and remains also the true Religion, for it is amply written therein.

But the Bible remained and was preserved in the midst of the darkened Papacy.

Therefore also the true Religion remained, preserved in the midst of the Papacy, and was neither entirely lost, nor did it disappear.

Regarding this: The Holy Scriptures were not, before Luther, something buried in the earth or hidden in a chest, so that no one could have read in it or have heard from it, but rather the Gospel and Apostolic lections were at least read before the people every week, even if the eunuchs placed their glosses and fables after them.

Of this there is no doubt: that many saintly hearts also beat their way home, becoming diligent in the Bible, and searched, which was not without fruit, since the Word of God never returns empty (Is. 55:11).

From this it appears clearly: in part that our teaching was never obliterated, since it was at all times present in the Holy Scriptures, and in part that the same was also openly borne before the people as often as one read the Biblical text in the Church, and in part that it was also secretly received when God-fearing hearts diligently gleaned in God's Word at home, since the same never departs without fruit.[62]

In the time of the Pharisaical corruption, even as now, the true teaching was preserved in the writings of Moses and the prophets. Father Abraham referred to this (Luke 16:29) and also the Lord Christ (Matthew 25:2). Even so it also came out in the Papacy, in which, even though terror was propagated, nevertheless, the Holy Bible, and therefore the Apostolic teaching which is in it, was received and well kept in all ages.

Hermanus Hugo objects in vol. 3 of *de vera fide capessenda,* p. 174,[63] "All heretics can in this fashion say that their religion was also preserved and propagated through all ages since someone has always read the Bible."

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[62]Here we see the particularly Lutheran emphasis on the efficacy of the Word as it is both preached and read. Just as earlier in this discussion, the Word as it is personally read is secondary in order to that preached, and is only spoken-of as efficacious in connection with the reading by the faithful. It is evident from Meisner's very style of writing that he is taking care to walk circumspectly here, avoiding error on all sides. To the Lutherans in the age of Orthodoxy there was more involved in correct understanding than merely picking-up the text with the belief that it is God's Word. Meisner is not here discussing so much the means of conversion as the evidence of the existence of the True Church under the Papacy. Only be recognizing this can the paragraph which follows against the objection of Hugo be seen as not evading the issue.

[63]Hugo (1588-1605) a Belgian Jesuit, was apparently a fairly minor character. There is no mention of Hugo in any of the standard histories or Encyclopediae cited, but the *Jesuiten Lexikon* (Koch, Ludwig, S.J.,..., Loewen Belgium, Verlag der Bibliothek S.J., 1962), has a brief entry, which does not reference this particular book.

We answer: It is one thing to make that basic statement, it is another to say it with foundation and truth. The assertion of the heretics is false, because their teaching is not in agreement with the Holy Scriptures. Our assertion is true because our teaching is founded in the Holy Scriptures. Do the Jesuits deny this? Then they should wander to the Holy Bible with us, and meanwhile lay aside their useless question. The heretics also assert that the ancient teachers of the Church agree with them. Will the Papists then for this reason abandon their argument from the consensus of the ancient teachers of the Church?

Secondly, that which the Christian Church and her members encountered is also easily shown -- that is, where they were before Luther. Namely, it can be said in a phrase -- in the midst of the Papacy. For it is written in 2Thess. 2:4 that the sons of perdition will set themselves up in the Temple of God, that is, in the Christian Church. Now the Roman Pope is precisely that son of perdition, for it follows that he has set himself in the Temple of God, and that the House of the Lord, or the Christian Church, therefore, was in the midst under the Papacy. For otherwise the Pope could not have lorded Himself over God's Temple.

But one may further inquire, "Who, then, were the persons who did not hearken to the Papal church, but rather to the Catholic Apostolic Church?" We could indeed not answer this question, and do so without guilt, because the true Christians, for the most part, were scattered here and there and remained hidden. Nevertheless, and abundantly, we give this correct answer: that there were four different groups of true Christians which are all to be regarded as members of the true Apostolic Church.

In the first company we place the little baptized children. For although the Sacrament of Holy Baptism was polluted with many human trifles, none-the-less the substance and action is still there, complete in its environs. Therefore also in the Baptism of the Papists little children are cleansed from sin, incorporated into Christ,

and received into the Apostolic Church as true members on earth. Accordingly, even if no one could say anything more about the baptized children, we have still already proven that the Christian Church did not completely and entirely disappear in the Papacy. Therefore we can also conclude:

Where there are baptized and re-born children there is truly also the Apostolic Church.

Under the Papacy there were always baptized and re-born children.

Therefore the Apostolic Church also truly existed at all times under the Papacy.

A Hungarian priest objects that we cannot prove that the little children would have practiced our faith. The Calvinists would say the Children would practice their religion, etc.

We answer: We are introducing the little children not particularly as confessors of our faith, but rather as members of the true Church. Because the Papists say, "The Church must have completely disappeared before Luther, because the Evangelical religion was not openly in vogue." To this we say, "This does not follow, for at the very least the true Church could have been preserved through the baptized children, as properly-made members of the Church. However, concerning the reception and confession of the true Religion, this is neither substantiated nor proven by us with the children, but rather by the example of other saintly people."

In the second company are found the dying Christians. There are certainly many who turned to Christ their Savior alone, shortly before their death, and built no more on their own work or on the merits of the saints. For they find that in reality there is no strong trust or rest-giving certainty in this teaching. For they are then like stubble, burning-up and becoming extinct in their hearts. All become convinced that if God would go up-against us in court we, with our good works, could never stand. Therefore we fear and are so greatly terrified when we hear

something about the last severe Judgment of God. Accordingly we may be certain that many of them looked alone to Christ and His merits when in peril of death. For that purpose many were instructed in the book, *Hortulo Animae,*[64] in which are many beautiful little prayers, which one may lead the dying in praying. And these prayers lead one only to the merits of Christ, as is also done by the Meinz Agenda (Folio 71), and the Salzburger Agenda (Folio 10).[65] Also, Martin Eisengrein,[66] the former professor at Ingolstadt, wrote a particular book which received the approbation of the theological faculty, namely, concerning how one may comfort the dying and direct them alone to the merits of Christ. And thus George, Duke of Saxony,[67] would hold a crucifix before himself when in peril of death, and would

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[64]It seems safe to assume that this title is a variant of *Horticulus Animae.* This was a common book of personal prayers and meditations used in the latter middle-ages. The title means, "Little Garden of the Soul." Contained in this book were: The Little Office of Our Lady, portions of the Gospel accounts of the Passion of Christ, the Penitential Psalms, and the Litany of the Saints, in addition to much "supplementary devotional matter." (Cf. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, p. 153) Though Meisner finds much praiseworthy in this book, it was not regarded so highly by Luther, who saw this book as extremely objectionable, and one of the reasons for his writing his own *Personal Prayer Book*, which was a forerunner of the Catechism. (*Luther's Works*, vol. 43, p. 11f.) To say the least Luther and Meisner are emphasizing different aspects of the book, if they are not in disagreement in their assessment of its value. Chemnitz also mentions a book called "*hortuli*" in the *Examination of the Council of Trent,* under the locus of images (op. cit., vol. 4, p. 140). Here he criticizes the instruction that the book gives for honoring the cross, saying that the proper sense in which one honors the cross is not what is implied or understood according to the book. It would be interesting to know how Meisner would have judged that part of the book, in light of his ensuing discussion.

[65]In context we may conclude that these were local church agendas of the Roman dioceses named. After the Tridentine standardization of worship forms such agendas are extremely difficult to find.

[66]Martin Eisengrein, was actually a contemporary Chemnitz et. al. (born 1535, died, 1578). Though he did get his book censored, as Meisner relates, he was also the author of polemics against the Protestants. (*Lexikon fuer Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 3, 777)

[67]Assuming that Meisner is referring to George the Bearded, (1471-1539), of Ducal Saxony, this is a rather remarkable use of one of the major enemies of Luther and the Reformation. George was, however, a notably pious Catholic and is most likely the one referenced (Cf. *Theologische Realenzyklopaedie*, vol. 12, pp. 385-389). Meisner is not concerned, then, with choosing sides, or "we vs. they" dichotomies, but ecumenically looks for sincere faith.

call-out: "the good runner yields right there,"[68] which proverb the duke always maintained for use, and with it he was always directed to Christ alone.

Clement Schau, Chaplain at Eisleben, as found in the *Catalogo testium veritatis, tom. 2., lib. 19, p. 905ff.*[69] tells us that he was at the death-bed of Ernesto, the Archbishop of Magdeburg,[70] along with two Franciscans, one of whom said: "Be of good cheer, dear lord, we will impart not only our good works but those of the entire Order of Minors for your Grace; No doubt you will then stand before the Judgment-seat of God and be saved." Thereupon the Archbishop answered: "No, nowhere do I wish to place my confidence in your work. The Work of my Lord Christ alone must suffice. I rely on that." It was announced of Emperor Charles V[71] by the secretary of Pope Paul V that the Bishop of Toledo himself wrote to the Pope in Rome, that Emperor Charles said shortly before his death that it appeared to him that the Lutheran teaching concerning Justification was the true and Scriptural

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[68]A colloquial saying, difficult to translate, but with the general meaning that the soul who runs his earthly race well humbles himself before the cross. The metaphor of the pilgrim's earthly struggle as a race is strong in German piety, due in part to the didactic poem of Hugh of Trimberg (1235-1313), *Der Renner*. (Cf. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, p. 195.)

[69]A work by Matthias Flacius (1520-1575), the famous theologian of Jena who fell out of grace with his fellows over the proper formulation of the Doctrine of original sin. This work was published in 1556. (Cf. *Theologisches Realenzyklopaedie*, vol. 11, pp. 206-214) This work contains accounts, as the name implies, of the "true faith" before Luther. It is interesting that this work is not listed by Walch (see footnote 14, op. cit.), along with the other responses to the famous Jesuit question. This work is frequently mentioned by Meisner and later receives his high commendation to readers interested in further study.

[70]None of the names in this account are listed in any of the works cited. The "Catalogo" of Flacius is essential to the account, but unavailable to this author.

[71]This whole account is somewhat convoluted. His sources for this are quite unknown, if he gives us the name of the Pope as a reference. Charles V (1500-1558) died two years after the publication of Flacius' *Catalogo*, (cf. footnote 26), so that could not have been the direct source for Meisner. Moreover, Pope Paul V. held office from 1605-1621 so this must be a fairly contemporary report. (*Lexikon fuer Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 8, p. 202)

teaching. Thus a few relate concerning Emperor Maximilian II,[72] that as the Neopolitan bishop, Lambertus Graterus, came to visit him before his death he would not allow the bishop to enter until he said that he would speak with him of nothing other than the merits of Christ and His bloody sweat. This also then the Bishop did and presented a beautiful sermon about the benefits of Christ. Thereafter when the Emperor was asked if he would depart in this faith and trust he answered that he would do nothing other.

That is therefore the second company of true Christians: namely, everyone who comes to know the inadequacy of their works and false teachings of the Papists in the struggle[73] on the deathbed, and have on the other hand, and have come, through their faith, to Jesus Christ alone. From this it appears the more clearly that it is a negligible sowing of an Hungarian Priest who takes the gleaning upon himself and forwards: "One cannot prove that the dying Papists were Lutheran. One could just as easily say that they were Turkish[74]." For the first is completely proven, particularly, that the article concerning the ground of salvation, and the inadequacy of works was arrived at. The second is a naked evasion, for not one example of apostasy into Turkish belief is brought forward. but we can, on the other hand, demonstrate that many of the dying, through the testimony of their own conscience and the rebuke of their own prayers, recognized the inadequacy of their works, placed themselves upon the merits of Christ alone, and therefore died good evangelical deaths.

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[72]Holy Roman Emperor (1527-76, reigned, 1564-76), Son of Emperor Ferdinand I, he was married to the daughter of Charles V. Favored the Protestants somewhat because of his tutor (*Lexikon Fuer Theologie und Kirche*, v. 7, p. 206). Meisner continues to use examples of Roman Catholics from the time of Luther or later, thereby demonstrating *how* the Church was preserved under the Papacy, in addition to those examples from before Luther which demonstrate that it indeed was preserved.

[73]The German word here is "Anfechtung."

[74]Colloquial for the "Mohammedan" religion.

In the third company we place the secret and scattered Christians. For exactly as in the time of Elijah and the Pharisees there was no public teaching in practice other than false teaching in the Kingdom of Israel and Judaism, and yet there were many thousand saintly hearts concealed beneath them, who did not consent to the abomination, but rather remembered the true teaching in their hearts, who were also specially preserved by God, that they might yet give up their lives against the hypocrites; thus it was certainly, that in the Papacy there were always found many God-fearing hearts which so confessed the Truth, and never consented to the abomination and tyranny of the Pope. Then even though they could never preach against it openly, because they must fear the persecution, and they recalled that one should not be eager to give his life in a time of danger. Nevertheless they kept the true faith in their hearts and also did not bend the knee to the Roman Baal. There were many grievances overall in the Papacy, also before Luther, against the great abuses and miscellany of errors that encroached one upon the other. Therefore saintly hearts sighed after a Christian Reformation many times and in various places. Thus also, as soon as Luther began to preach and to write against the indulgence many were genuinely glad and thanked God that their sighs were heard and now one was come who arose to undertake the long-awaited work of the Reformation. Therefore there are to this day also many among the Papists who little regard the power of the Pope, purgatory, the mass, and the merits of good works, and are therefore one with us, even though they remain in the Papacy, whether it be from fear, or because the Lutheran teaching has been made odious to them in other articles from those of the Jesuits.[75] Now in certain secret, saintly, and simple Christians for the most part the Apostolic Church was preserved before Luther, as in the times of Elijah and the Pharisees.

[75]As we will also see later, Meisner is not interested in complete agreement on all points of doctrine when he finds allies, but rather locates them on the general principle of opposition to the Pope and the particularly anti-Christian innovations of the same.

In the fourth and last company we place the holy Martyrs and public confessors of the Evangelical Truth. These were found at all times in the Papacy, since it was never lacking for God-fearing, courageous Christians, which the Pope denounced, and boldly announced his abominations before the people. However, their lives were ended quickly, their books were burned, their names were obliterated. Therefore one cannot know all of the martyrs beaten-down in the Papacy. Nevertheless, a good number are listed in the Magdeburg History,[76] as every industrious reader can consult.

Then, first-of-all, there were entire congregations[77] that were opposed to the Pope in many points, and contested his teaching, and did so many years consecutively, as the Waldenses[78] always did, who are also called "the Poor of

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[76]An extensive (12 vol.), though incomplete, history of the Church with a particularly Lutheran bent edited by Matthias Flacius (See ft.note 45 above). For an in-depth discussion of the *Centuries* themselves see the dissertation by Diener, Ronald Ernst, *The Magdeburg Centuries: A Bibliothecal and Historiographical Analysis*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University.

[77]We may note from context that the word for "congregations," "Gemeinden," in the German, is much broader than we generally understand it. The Waldenses were more of a denomination than a single, local congregation.

[78]The "Waldenses" were the followers of a merchant of Lyons, by the name of Peter Waldes. Waldes was a mover for reform in the Roman Church, emphasizing poverty (taking Matthew 19:21 in its strictest sense), reading the Gospel in the vernacular, in addition to the basic rejections outlined by Meisner. Although Robert Lerner in *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages* suggests that they were lay preachers and decidedly anti-clerical, this is not entirely true. They had a fairly strict heierarchical polity and division between clergy and laity, though the clergy were not in the direct lineage of the Roman hierarchy. The tendency to assume the Office for themselves without a call, as well as ordination of women, and the invention of various legends to support their belief would have made Lutherans like Meisner uncomfortable, but he is more interested in pointing to those before Luther who generally opposed Rome and recognized the need for reform. It is also significant that the Mauret-Thompson *History of the Catholic Church*, (st. Louis, B. Herder, 1947. vol. 4, p. 526f.) paints this sect in a much less radical light than does *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages*. The most bold ascriptions of heresy are made by the latter and not by the former, which, for example, never mentions women's ordination. What exactly the doctrines or heresies were of the Waldensians may take more research, and a more ecclesial perspective than Lerner was willing to give.

Lugdun,"[79] who rejected human statutes, purgatory, the mass, pilgrimages, celibacy of the priests, monastic orders, and other Papal articles of faith, and maintained their religion from the Holy Scriptures, according to *Catalogus testium veritatis, part. 2, lib. 15,*[80] *Aenius Sylvius, in Hist. Bohem. cap. 35,*[81] *Sleidanus lib. 16,*[82] *Poplinarius in hist. Fr. l. I. edit Anno 1581., fol. 6.7.*[83] And Thuanus, in the 5th book of his history[84] deals with more reports. Along with the Waldenses were also the Greek congregations, who in similar form would never recognize the Pope as the one universal bishop and Viceroy of Christ, and still do not recognize him as such, therefore they annually, on the Sunday of *Quadragesima* excommunicate him as a public heretic and place him under the Ban.[85]

Secondly there were also many saintly emperors, kings, and dukes who did not consent to the Pope's abominations and posturing[86]. Emperor Henry the

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[79]"Lugdunum" is the ancient Latin name for Lyons, where the Waldenses had their start. (See footnote 54) It is more common by far that these men be referred-to as the "Poor men of Lyons."

[80]See footnote 70, above.

[81]Aeneas Sylvius -- Pope Pius II, pontificate: 1458-1464, known as a scholar for his literary production and histories. (The New Catholic Encyclopedia, v. 11, pp. 393-94)

[82]Sleidanus (1506-1556) was a Protestant historian associated after 1544 with Bucer in Strassbourg. His *World History*, to which Meisner probably refers was used as a school textbook among Protestants until the eighteenth century. (*Lexikon fuer Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 9, p. 834)

[83]An author and work not found in any of the works cited.

[84]Thuanus, a.k.a. Jaques-Auguste de Thou (1553-1617), a French parliamentarian and Gallican Catholic. The work to which Meisner refers is an extensive history, *Historia sui temporis*. (*Lexikon fuer Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 10, p. 170)

[85]Although the rite which Meisner describes is certainly not unreasonable, given the broken communion between the Eastern Church and Rome, such a rite is not explicitly referenced in the most common volumes on the Eastern Orthodox liturgy or in any of the encyclopedic works or histories.

[86]"Fuernenten," -- I don't know what this word means precisely, and neither do any of the major dictionaries, for it is not listed anywhere. This translation is based on the roots.

fourth denounced Pope Gregory VII.[87] Emperor Frederick the second accused the Pope of amassing inordinate power and wishing to be feared by everyone as a god.[88] Philip, King of France, allowed the Pope no room for power in secular things.[89] Emperor Ludwig the fourth held Pope John XXII to be a heresiarch and

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[87] The falling-out between Henry IV (1050-1106) and Pope Gregory VII (a.k.a. "Hildebrand," held office, 1073-1085) is characterized in the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*: "Henry challenged Pope Gregory VII , whose reform program was undermining Henry's control of the imperial church, by investing his own candidate as archbishop of Milan. When the pope threatened Henry with excommunication, Henry and a synod of German bishops at Worms deposed Gregory in January, 1076. Gregory responded by excommunicating Henry..." (vol. 6, p. 163). This excommunication led to a revolt and Henry standing in the snow doing penance at Canossa. Henry was excommunicated a second time in 1080, after which Henry and a group of bishops selected their own Pope, Clement III, and went to war against Rome. Subsequent popes in the succession continued to denounce Henry. A less strictly secular view is provided by Horace Mann in his *The Lives of the Popes*, (St. Louis, B. Herder, 1925, vol. 7, pp. 77-171). As with all of the following examples, it may be claimed that there was as much politics as religion involved in the differences between Henry and Gregory, but this cannot be used to write-off Meisner's point unless one is able to clearly delineate a difference between politics and religion in the Middle Ages in the first place. The element of belief and conviction is always present in a religious (some would say, "superstitious") society. It is clear that Gregory understood doctrinal issues to be at the heart of his differences with Henry, both investiture and the issues of his reform, which hit the German Church hard. (A more Papal view of this is found in Ferdinand Mauret's *History of the Catholic Church*, {St. Louis, Herder, 1947, vol. 4, pp. 205-236}.) Henry, in convoking synods of bishops, also dealt with Hildebrand as being in error against the true Church. We should not be surprised if the Lutherans, such as Meisner, recognize doctrinal issues here as well, and tend to see Henry as a hero of the faith.

[88]Frederick II (1194-1250) also took military action against the earthly power of the Pope, and remained at enmity with the Papacy both under Gregory IX, as well as the more irenic Innocent IV. Historical accounts of the differences between Fredrick and the popes suggest that this emperor's motives against the Papacy were much less pure (as was Fredrick himself) than Henry IV. (Cf. *History of the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 188-203)

[89]It is difficult to be sure of which Philip Meisner has in mind. Both Philip I (born 1165, reigned, 1180-1223) and Philip IV (born 1268, reigned, 1285-1314) had serious problems with the Papacy. At the center of both disagreements was the issue of the ultimate power of the Papacy in investiture, as had been the case between Rome and France since Charlemagne at least. However, it would seem that Philip IV is the more likely choice for Meisner's example, since the tiff with Philip I was tarnished by Philip's ulterior motives of justifying his own immorality, while Philip IV was an intensely pious man who accused the Pope of all manner of immorality. (See *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, pp. 269-272)

master of heresies.[90] In this number fall also other Roman Emperors, such as Otto the fourth,[91] Henry the seventh,[92] as well as the Kings of England, John[93] and Edward III,[94] the Kings of France, Charlemagne,[95] and Louis XII.[96] And there are also many other noble lords and dukes who did not bear in any case with the Pope's teaching and life.

Thirdly, and finally, there were found at all times stalwart teachers who defended the evangelical Truth, and therefore were executed by the Pope, as befell

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[90]The German has two words here that mean essentially the same thing, "heresiarch," and "Ketzermeister." John XXII held office from 1316 to 1334. Ludwig is the Germanization of Louis, this being Louis IV of Bavaria (born, 1282, reigned, 1314-1347). Like Henry IV, Louis also set-up an anti-Pope, and also like Henry, there were serious doctrinal issues at stake in addition to the political power struggle. Louis was influenced by "radical Franciscans" such as Occam, Michael of Cesna, and Bonagratia of Bergamo. (ibid., vol. 8, pp. 1019-1021).

[91]Otto IV (born, 1175, reigned, 1209-1218) also attacked Papal lands in a power struggle between the Emperor and the Pope. (ibid., vol. 10, p. 820)

[92]The dispute between Henry VII and Rome is the most minor of Meisner's examples, seemingly nothing more than a dispute over whom the Pope supported for Emperor. (*History of the Church*, v. IV, p. 306) It is possible that Meisner is referring to a history that has a more polemic understanding of the affair, such as would be found in the *Magdeburg Centuries*.

[93]It is interesting to note that Henry VIII is not listed. Perhaps this list only includes sovereigns prior to the Reformation. A biased, but insightful account of the political conflict of John with the Papacy is given in Herbermann, Charles G., et al., *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York, The Encyclopedia Press, 1913. vol. 5, p. 437.

[94]The contention between Edward III and the Papacy is best summed-up by a quote from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, (ibid., p. 322): "Ecclesiastically, Edward's reign was marked by some legislation against the Pope. The difficulties were caused partly by the heavy taxation levied by the pope upon the clergy, and partly by the appointment of foreigners to English benefices by the Pope;...He died deserted by all except one priest..."

[95]The Emperor Charlemagne, of course, unlike many of the Emperors and Kings of France listed above, did not have a permanent falling-out with Rome. However, Charlemagne's strong assertion of his own secular power demanded that the popes (Adrian I and Leo III) should allow him also the power of placing clergy and investiture. (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, p. 499.) It would be a profitable study to examine all of the various phases of the investiture struggle in light of how the Lutherans viewed them, attending particularly to the belief in the necessity and distinction of the three estates.

[96]Although tinged with a Gallican ecclesial spirit, the struggle of Louis XII against Rome was quite secular and military in nature. (Cf. Guizot, *History of France*, Boston, S.J.Parkhill, 1888. vol. III, pp. 141f.)

Huss[97] and Savonarola.[98] Who reads these histories and would like to know, should see *Catalogum testium veritatis*,[99] in which book is told from one century to another through the length of time which persons opposed the Papacy, and how the true Evangelical Faith was always preached and propagated also in the midst of the darkness. There I would like to direct the reflective reader.

What Hermanus Hugo objects (l. 3 p. 175)[100] is really very simplistic, namely, that before Luther no one could have confessed the Lutheran Faith because there was nothing Lutheran before Luther. For the teaching itself is one thing, but the title "Lutheran" is quite another. Our teaching has existed at all times, although it was not always called "Lutheran." Thus in the midst of the Arian struggle the true Christians were called the "homoousians," which word first came into use at that time.[101] Is one also therefore able to conclude that the teaching of the omoousia *Filii Dei* was not previously known or confessed?

And therefore it is also now demonstrated:

First-of-all, that our teaching was preserved at all times under the Papacy in the Holy Bible.

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[97]John Huss (1373-1416) the reform-minded priest from Hungary who was burned for heresy, is often listed as a "forerunner" of the Reformation (*The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, vol. 4, p. 1960) The connection between Hus being praised by the Lutherans as a predecessor of Luther and the accusation of Eck against Luther, that the Husite heresy had risen again, is worthy of consideration. (See Dau, op.cit., p. 201)

[98]Savonarola, (1452-1498) an Italian, was also burned as a heretic. Though possessing many of the same doctrinal sentiments as others who were dissatisfied with the Papacy, Savonarola also emphasized political reform and issued prophecies that were less than flattering to his enemies. (*Lexikon fuer Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 9, p. 354)

[99]See footnote 70.

[100]Cf. footnote 63.

[101]□□□□□□□□ the Greek for the phrase "of one substance," from the Nicene Creed as it was formulated at the Council of Nicea (325). A concise discussion of this and why the Arians objected to it may be found in Gerald Bray's book, Creeds Councils and Christ, Fort Wayne, CTS Press, 1992. (a reprint of an unlisted original), pp. 86, 105f.

Secondly, that the true Church existed under the Papists, because the Pope set himself up in the Temple of God.

Thirdly, that everywhere true members of the Christian Church were found, because they were: 1) the little baptized children, 2) saintly dying Christians, 3) the secret Christians, 4) the public confessors of the Truth as entire congregations, emperors, kings, teachers and preachers, who, though they may have sometimes wandered in one or another article, still in most of the Articles they agree with us. On the other hand the Papists cannot point to one who a thousand years ago or more had taught in all articles as the Jesuits now take care to teach. Much more can be said of this in another place and at another time.

But to You, O Lord Jesus Christ, who alone are the Head of your Communion, the Way, and the Truth, we fervently cry, You will preserve Your flock among us, give Your Word strength, check the Jesuits, and from seductive apostasy graciously protect us. In this Your Name be hallowed, Your Kingdom extended, and Your Will may be accomplished here in time and beyond in eternity. To You together with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory, honor, and praise ever and in eternity.

Amen.

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